PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL PROPOSAL
ON EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Propuesta psicoeducativa sobre competencias emocionales en jóvenes universitarios

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Abstract

Several studies have reported a link between emotional competencies and academic achievement in higher education, and about the need to implement strategies for young university students to face educational demands. Along this line, the aim of this study is to explore the characteristics of emotional regulation that affect the academic performance of a group of university students, with the purpose of designing a psychoeducational proposal aimed at strengthening the emotional self-management of this population. For this, a diagnostic phase was carried out in which 80 university students participated, 33.8 % male and 66.2 % female, aged between 18 and 25 years (M = 21.09; SD = 1.92), to whom the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS) instrument and the *Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador* (PUCE) Learning Assessment Scale were applied. The results showed the presence of difficulties in goal-orientation behaviors, as well as a significant association between academic performance and lack of emotional acceptance and clarity. With these findings, the Logical Framework methodology was used to design a proposal of seven workshops to promote the development of competencies related to emotional recognition and management, stress and anxiety management, decision making and conflict management, intrinsic motivation and self-knowledge, time management and administration.

Keywords

Emotional competencies, emotional regulation, academic performance, emotional development, psychoeducational proposal, higher education, university students.

Resumen

Varios estudios han reportado una asociación entre competencias emocionales y logros académicos en educación superior, y sobre la importancia de implementar estrategias para que los jóvenes afronten las demandas educativas. En esta línea, el objetivo del presente estudio consistió en explorar las características de la competencia de regulación emocional que inciden en el rendimiento académico de un grupo de jóvenes universitarios, con la finalidad de diseñar una propuesta psicoeducativa orientada a fortalecer la autogestión emocional de esta población. Para ello, se realizó una fase diagnóstica en la que participaron ochenta estudiantes universitarios, 33,8 % de sexo masculino y 66,2 % de sexo femenino, con edades comprendidas entre 18 y 25 años (*M* = 21,09; *DE* = 1,92), a quienes se les aplicó el instrumento Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS) y la Escala de Valoración de Aprendizajes de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador (PUCE). Los resultados mostraron la presencia de dificultades en conductas dirigidas a metas, así como una asociación significativa entre rendimiento académico y falta de aceptación y de claridad emocional. Con estos hallazgos, se empleó la metodología del Marco Lógico para diseñar una propuesta de siete talleres para fomentar el desarrollo de competencias relacionadas con reconocimiento y gestión de emociones, manejo de estrés y ansiedad, toma decisiones y manejo de conflictos, motivación intrínseca y autoconocimiento, gestión y administración del tiempo.

Palabras clave

Competencias emocionales, regulación emocional, rendimiento académico, propuesta psicoeducativa, educación superior, estudiantes universitarios.

Introduction

The term "competences" encompasses a set of characteristics by which people develop the skills necessary to develop assertively in various contexts, such as the family, interpersonal or work. Therefore, higher education must include, in addition to academic knowledge, the development

of the essential emotional competences so that future professionals can perform more efficiently in their areas.

The aim of this study is to explore the characteristics of emotional regulation competence that affect the academic performance of a group of young university students, in order to design a psychoeducational proposal aimed at strengthening the emotional self-management of this population. In this sense, it defends the idea that emotional competencies favor the achievement of academic competencies necessary for professionalization. This topic is important during university life, since the higher education of the current era requires the development of the capacity to understand the world, internalize it, establish relations with it and seek its transformation (Ospina-Carmona *et al.*, 2022).

In line with this objective, this document presents a bibliographic review on the topics of study: emotional and academic competences in higher education, its foundation and relationship. Then, the results of the diagnostic phase are shown, in which eighty university students participated, to whom the instrument DERS (Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale) (Gratz and Roemer, 2004) and the Appraisal of Learning Scale established by the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador (PUCE, 2022) were applied in a self-report form. Based on the results obtained, a psychoeducational proposal was designed consisting of seven workshops that address issues related to emotional self-management, anxiety and stress management, conflict resolution, decision-making and time management. Finally, the discussion and conclusions of the study are presented, related to the results and the proposed objective.

State-of-the-art

A brief review of the approaches of some of the agencies related to higher education allows to observe that the concept of competence is used to refer to the theoretical and practical knowledge that university students must acquire during their training. Although it can be assumed that the achievement of cognitive-technical skills includes the development of the necessary emotional competencies, there is no evidence in official documents of an explicit mention on the subject, which may lead to a lack of attention to this important field of higher education.

For example, UNESCO (2022) argues that students should be provided with the essential competencies to respond to the constant changes of the labor market. At the national level, the Academic Regime Regulation (ETUC, 2022) mentions that student evaluations have to be

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comprehensive, progressive, permanent and focused on measuring the achievement of competences and learning outcomes (art. 66). Similarly, the Regulations of the Organic Law on Higher Education (LOES, 2022) provide that the components of the examination of professional qualification must ensure that applicants possess the necessary competences for their professional practice (art. 32).

These attributes, which are those that are sought to develop with university education, are related to what Kennedy (2007) calls "knowledge and its instances, skills, responsibilities and attitudes" (p. 21), considering that the concept of competences is not restricted to the cognitive field, since it encompasses a greater set of characteristics. In relation to higher education, the achievement of competences implies an education in the academic and emotional spheres, related to the profession, so that university students acquire the necessary skills for conducting their work activities not only with solid knowledge, but with positive attitudes. At this point, the critical discursiveness and dialogicity proposed by Vergara (2022) for a higher echorelational training would be nourished by more empathic postures, product of the development of the emotional skills necessary to interact in society.

Emotional competences: dimensions, factors and scope

The concept of emotional competences emerged with Saarni (1999), who defined them as the set of skills that allow an adapted and efficient development. They are acquired skills based on emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2000), a construct that refers to a series of skills that contribute to the assessment, expression and proper regulation of emotions, as well as to motivation, planning and achievement (Salovey and Mayer, 1990). According to Goleman (2000), emotional intelligence is likely to be encouraged and strengthened, as its poor development can negatively influence people's well-being and success.

These approaches support the importance of emotional education, defined as a dynamic, continuous process that seeks to train integral people with skills to reduce vulnerability and maximize resilience to problems (Bisquerra, 2020). It is an essential complement of cognitive development, since through self-reflection and awareness, emotional education promotes the development of competences related to awareness, regulation and emotional autonomy, social interaction and skills for life and well-being (Bisquerra, 2020). Although all of them provide people

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with the ability to properly mobilize their emotions, the leading role of emotional regulation in the academic achievements of young university students has been reported (Moreta-Herrera *et al.*, 2018).

Regarding emotional regulation, most authors agree that it is the capacity by which people can properly manage their emotions (Kinkead *et al.*, 2011). This management involves becoming aware of the association between emotions, cognitions and behavior, thanks to which humans can modify their emotional expression, modulate their emotions and feelings, strengthen their coping skills and increase their competence to generate positive emotions for themselves (Bisquerra, 2020).

Various biological, environmental, and cultural factors associated with emotional regulation have been mentioned (Martínez, 2016). In terms of biological factors, the importance of several components stands out, among them: the activity of the cerebral amygdala that generates or initiates emotional processes (Calixto, 2018); the adrenocortical-hypothalamic-pituitary system, responsible for the production of cortisol that, at high levels, is associated with stress, anxiety and depression (Dionisio, 2022); the vagal tone that controls the heart rhythm versus emotional challenges (Martínez, 2016).

Regarding environmental factors, it has been reported that emotional regulation is related to attachment links and parenting models (Díaz-Mosquera *et al.*, 2022; Martínez, 2016). The cultural factor, on the other hand, includes the variables of sex and gender. The first refers to the biological conformation while gender is associated with the roles that each cultural context grants to people (Lamas, 2018; Martínez, 2016) and against which the individual makes particular decisions.

The contributions of the aforementioned studies account for the holistic dimension of the human being and allow us to observe that the level at which people develop emotional competences refers to a series of factors, which affect the way in which each individual manages his experiences. It is important to highlight, therefore, the importance of transdisciplinarity in higher education, which involves the participation of all human dimensions in the learning process, including the emotional and affective world of students (Pauta-Ortiz *et al.*, 2023).

Competences for Professionalization and Academic Performance

Academic competences refer to the theoretical and practical knowledge in specialty subjects that people acquire and that, in the case of university

education, are aimed at professionalization (CES, 2022; UNESCO, 2022). The achievement of this type of competences is evidenced through academic performance, a multidimensional and complex construct associated with the achievement of learning results (Mora, 2015), which is generally reflected in the grades.

Research on the subject has identified in higher education a number of variables involved in the academic performance of young people: personal, family, social and institutional factors (Martínez-Benítez *et al.*, 2020), these account for the multi-causal dimension, internal and external, which influences academic achievement (Borja *et al.*, 2021; Garbanzo, 2013) and the quality of professional training.

Personal factors are related to personal characteristics such as motivation for learning, perceived self-efficacy and self-concept, self-management skills and emotional regulation, level of satisfaction with one's life, career choice and the results achieved (Borja *et al.*, 2021; Garbanzo, 2013). Family and social factors are associated with the context of the student, for example: the characteristics of the family environment in terms of functionality, support and positive relations; the level of formal education of parents; the socioeconomic level of the family, which facilitates or limits the essential material resources for the study (Borja *et al.*, 2021; Garbanzo, 2013; Rodríguez and Rosquete, 2019). Among the social factors are the quality and type of relationships of the student with the environment, their friends and people they interact, including those relationships generated online. Institutional factors refer to the conditions of the university environment (Zapata *et al.*, 2016), for example: the characteristics of the study curriculum and the level of complexity, the methodologies used in the training process and the relationships with teachers and classmates (Borja *et al.*, 2021; Zapata *et al.*, 2016).

Some of these factors are associated with each other, depending on individual differences, and can generate varying levels of tension and anxiety in students (Caballero *et al.*, 2007).

Emotional and Academic Competences in the University Context

As mentioned, the achievement of academic competences is closely related to emotional experiences, which can favor learning or rather hinder it (Merlino and Ayllón, 2015; Moreta-Herrera *et al.*, 2018), depending on the type of emotional experience and how it is self-managed.

Adequate emotional regulation at the university is related to the ability of students to manage stress levels that can arise as a result of educational situations, such as preparation of exams and elaboration of tasks. It is also associated with the presence of fewer emotional distractors that interfere with the performance of academic activities, thereby increasing the chances of achieving a successful academic performance (Pulido and Herrera, 2017). However, there are cases in which stress is not assertively managed, so that some students have difficulty adapting to the demands of university life, which can trigger exhaustion, negative attitudes, loss of interest (Caballero *et al.*, 2007), procastination (Moreta-Herrera *et al.*, 2018), etc., which affect student development and academic achievement.

Several studies and literature reviews have reported the relationship between emotional management and achievements in university performance (Fried, 2011; Merlino and Ayllón, 2015; Gordillo, 2023; Moreta-Herrera *et al.*, 2018; Pereno *et al.*, 2012). In fact, an electroencephalographic study found that an important predictor of success in higher education is behavioral control that occurs thanks to the process of emotional regulation (Reynoso, 2016). Likewise, Pulido and Herrera (2017) found in their research that students with higher emotional regulation skills obtained higher grades.

On the other hand, emotions, besides being linked to cognitive processes, influence the intrinsic motivation of people (Borja *et al.*, 2021; Calixto, 2018; Fried, 2011). In this sense, positive emotions generate more and better cognitive resources, which increase the creativity of responses, psychological well-being and health of students (Pereno *et al.*, 2012; Calixto, 2018). In contrast, negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, and stress hinder deep information processing and thus impair academic performance (Pereno *et al.*, 2012).

A useful way to carry out emotional education, in topics such as self-management and emotional regulation at the university, is through psycho-educational intervention, understood as an action that combines psychological and educational strategies with the purpose of promoting development and personal well-being (*i. e.* Manjunatha and Ram, 2022). In this field, several academic works on the subject are registered, carried out with the participation of students of different schooling levels, which report satisfactory results (*i. e.* De la Hoya, 2021; Ervacio, 2022; Gómez, 2017; Torres, 2021).

Materials and methods

This study was carried out in two stages. At first, a diagnostic phase was conducted using a mixed approach of research, descriptive-exploratory

type and cross-sectional (Hernández *et al.*, 2014), in order to identify the areas related to emotional regulation competence in which difficulties occur and appreciate their association with academic performance. In the second phase, the methodology of the Logical Framework (Ortegón *et al.*, 2015) was used to design a psychoeducational proposal that addressed the needs identified in the first stage.

Regarding ethical considerations, it should be mentioned that this study is derived from a dissertation in Educational Psychology, in all its stages, approved by the Research Directorate and the Committee on Ethics of Research in Human Beings (CEISH) of PUCE.

Diagnostic phase

Participants

The participants were eighty university students, selected by a non-probabilistic sampling and by casual grouping (Yuni and Urbano, 2020), who met the following inclusion criteria: undergraduate students of PUCE, enrolled at least in second level of university education and from 18 to 25 years old.

Out of the participants, 33.8 % (n = 27) reported being male and 66.2 % (n = 53), female, with an average of 21.09 years old (SD). In terms of career, 8.8 % came from Nursing, 18.8 % from Geography, 5 % from Engineering and 67.5 % from Psychology.

Assessment

A sociodemographic data sheet, the DERS instrument and the PUCE Learning Assessment Scale were used for the evaluation.

To assess the presence of difficulties in emotional regulation competition, the DERS scale (Gratz & Roemer, 2004), adapted to Spanish, was used by Hervás and Jódar (2008). The DERS is a self-report instrument that consists of 36 items, some of them posed inversely, to which it is answered by a scale of 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always). The items are distributed in six subscales:

· Impulse control difficulty (DCI, 6).
· Limited access to regulatory strategies (ALE, 8).
· Lack of emotional acceptance (FAE, 6).
· Interference of goal-directed behaviors (ICM, 5).

· Lack of emotional awareness (FCE, 6).
· Lack of emotional clarity (FCL, 5) (Gratz and Roemer, 2004).

As for the cut-off points, scores from 0 to 14 on the total scale indicate no difficulties in emotional regulation. 15 to 24, normal. From 43 onwards, there is presence of difficulties (Zumba-Tello and Moreta-Herrera, 2022).

In reference to the reliability and validity, in the original scale an adequate internal consistency was found (range of 0.80 to 0.89 in the sub-scales and 0.93 in the total scale), as well as an appropriate predictive and criterion validity, and a good test-retest reliability (Gratz and Roemer, 2004). More recent studies have reported similar Cronbach alpha indices. In Argentina, for example, a α = 0.93 was found in the total scale and a range between 0.74 and 0.89 was found between the subscales (Michelini and Godoy, 2022). In Ecuador one study found reliability coefficients of α = 0.90 (Reivan-Ortiz *et al.*, 2020), while another study recorded coefficients of α = 0.87 (Zumba-Tello and Moreta-Herrera, 2022). For this study, the internal consistency indices recorded were: BCI α = 0.75; ALE α = 0.779; FAE α = 0.744; BMI α = 0.828; FCE α = 0.684; FCL α = 0.772; DERS total scale α = 0.915.

On the other hand, the technique of providing information (Hernández *et al.*, 2014) was used to assess academic performance, in this case, by the young participants, using the learning assessment table of PUCE (2022), which is contained in the General Student Regulation (art. 49). This is a quantitative scale on 50 points, with its corresponding equivalence established as follows: 45 to 50 = excellent; 40 to 44 = very good; 34 to 39 = good; 30 to 33 = regular; 29 or less = failed.

Procedure

With prior authorization, several teachers from the PUCE were contacted and asked to allow a space in their classrooms to explain to the students the aspects related to the study. With those who expressed their free and voluntary decision to participate, the document of informed consent was signed, and the information was collected, which was coded numerically to ensure the anonymity of the participants' information.

The SPSS version 25 statistical package was used for data processing. Descriptive statistics and percentages, according to the case, of the sociodemographic data and the scales were calculated. With the results of the DERS, tests of normality and, according to needs, parametric and non-parametric tests for contrast by sex and by subscales were used, as well as correlations. In addition, a descriptive interpretation of the items with the highest percent-

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age of response was made in options 4 ("most of the time") and 5 ("almost always"). With the results in academic performance, the T test was used to contrast independent samples in order to appreciate the differences by sex. Finally, the chi-square test was used to assess the association of academic performance reported by participants with the results of the DERS scale.

Analysis and results of the diagnosis

1. *Emotional regulation*. With respect to emotional regulation competence, descriptive statistics obtained on the DERS subscales and the total scale, by sex and globally, are shown in Table 1. It is observed that in the ICM subscale, the mean and median values are higher.

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Table 1
Descriptive statistics by gender in DERS subscales and total scale (N = 80)

	Sex								Total			
	Men				Women							
	M	*FROM*	*Med*	*RI*	*M*	*FROM*	*Med*	*RI*	*M*	*FROM*	*Med*	*RI*
DCI	2.41	0.90	2.16	1.67	2.46	0.84	2.41	1.00	2.45	0.85	2.33	1.29
ALE	2.19	0.84	2.06	1.41	2.57	0.75	2.50	1.03	2.45	0.79	2.37	1.13
FAE	2.35	0.85	2.25	1.46	2.51	0.88	2.50	1.33	2.46	0.87	2.41	1.29
ICM	2.74	0.91	2.60	1.45	3.11	1.06	3.2	1.55	2.99	1.02	3.10	1.55
FCE	2.46	0.60	2.33	0.75	2.60	0.80	2.33	1.21	2.55	0.74	2.33	1.17
FCL	2.23	0.74	2.30	1.05	2.56	0.82	2.50	1.20	2.45	0.80	2.40	1.20
DERS total	2.38	0.60	2.26	0.95	2.62	0.62	2.62	0.81	2.54	0.62	2.56	0.83

DCI = difficulties in impulse control
ALE = limited access to regulatory strategies
FAE = lack of emotional acceptance
ICM = goal-directed behavior interference
FCE = lack of emotional awareness
FCL = lack of emotional clarity
DERS total = values on the DERS total scale

Source: own elaboration

With the Kolmogorov-Smimov normality test, a *p* value < 0.001 was recorded on the FCE subscale, in which medians and non-parametric tests were used for processing.

As for the sex of the participants, no significant differences (*p* > 0.05) were presented with the T test for independent samples be-

tween the means of the subscales DCI, ALE, FAE, ICM, FCL and in the total scale of the DERS. Nor were gender differences found in the medians of the FCE subscale with the Mann-Whitney U test.

For comparing ICM, which records the highest values (table 1), with the means of the subscales DCI, ALE, FAE, ICM, FCL and with the total scale, the ANOVA test was used. The results indicated that ICM showed statistically significant differences with DCI (F = 3.49; p < 0.001; η2 = 0.572), with ALE (F = 3.75; p < 0.001; η2 = 0.591) and with the total scale (F= 5.81; p<0.01; η2= 0.572). The values of Eta square (η²) indicate that more than 50 % of the variability in DCI, ALE and total scale are explained by the presence of ICM. For contrasting ICM with FCE medians and Wilcoxon test were used, in this case, statistically significant differences between the two subscales were also recorded (Z = -3.36; p < 0.001).

Table 2 shows the correlations recorded between the subscales and the total scale of the DERS. As seen, all correlate with the total scale and with each other at a significant level, except for FCE, which does not correlate with FAE or ICM.

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Table 2
Correlations between subscales and the DERS total scale (N = 80)

	DCI	ALE	FAE	ICM	FCE	FCL
DCI	1	0.644***	0.442***	0.473**	0.349**	0.471***
ALE		1	0.618***	0.630***	0.315**	0.586***
FAE			1	0.312**	0.181	0.330**
ICM				1	0.169	0.376***
FCE					1	0.470***
FCL						1
DERS						

DCI = difficulties in impulse control
ALE = limited access to regulatory strategies
FAE = lack of emotional acceptance
ICM = goal-directed behavior interference
FCE = lack of emotional awareness
FCL = lack of emotional clarity
DERS = DERS total scale
***p < 0.001
**p < 0.01
*p < 0.05

Source: own elaboration

To obtain an average result of the implementation of the participants in the DERS scale, the average of each of the 36 items was added. The result was $\Sigma = 91.12$, indicating the presence of difficulties in emotional regulation, in accordance with established cut-off points (Zumba-Tello and Moreta-Herrera, 2022). For assessing where these difficulties occur in most cases, the percentage of responses to the items' approaches, grouped by subscales, were calculated, which were located in options 4 ("most of the time") and 5 ("almost always") (Table 3).

It was found that, at the level of the subscales, the average percentage of options 4 and 5 ranged between 19.34 (FCL) and 38.72 (ICM). Likewise, items with higher percentages belong to ICM, confirming the impact of emotional dysregulation on goal-directed behaviors. It was found that 51.3 % of participants indicate that when they have some emotional distress they cannot develop their activities normally, 43.1 % state that, in these cases, it is difficult for them to concentrate and, 37.1 % report difficulties to perform their work.

As for emotional acceptance, 38.8 % of participants reported discomfort when faced with angry situations. Regarding impulse control, 37.5 % indicate that in such situations they lose control over their behavior. In terms of access to regulatory strategies, 36.3 % say they are emotionally overwhelmed and 32.6 % say they have difficulty reassuring themselves. In relation to emotional awareness, 33.8 % feel that they do not carefully analyze their feelings, while 30 % manifest difficulty in recognizing their emotional states, which is also seen in emotional clarity, in which also 30 % report difficulties in realizing how they are feeling.

Table 3
Percentages of items (by subscale) in DERS options 4 and 5

Subscale: Impulse control difficulties (DCI)					
No.	Item	% Op 4	% Op 5	% Sum	% Avg
3	I feel like my emotions dominate me and I can't control them.	11.4	6.3	17.7	
	When I feel annoyed:				
14	I can't control myself.	17.5	5	22.5	
19	I feel like I'm losing control.	16.3	11.3	27.6	
24r	I keep control over my behavior.	30	7.5	37.5	
27	I find it difficult to control my behavior.	8.8	6.3	15.1	
32	I lose control of my behavior.	13.9	8.9	22.8	22.80

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| \multicolumn{6}{c}{Sub-scale: Limited access to regulatory strategies (ALE)} | | | | | |

No.	Item	% Op 4	% Op 5	% Sum	% Avg
	When I feel annoyed:				
15	I think that bad mood is going to last a lot.	10	2.5	12.5	
16	I think I'll be depressed later.	13.8	2.5	16.3	
22r	I know I can calm down.	26.3	6.3	32.6	
28	I don't think there's anything I can do to make myself feel better.	13.9	1.3	15.2	
30	I'm starting to feel bad about myself.	11.7	13	24.7	
31	I think the only thing I can do is to keep thinking about it.	13.8	11.3	25.1	
35	It takes me a long time to feel wwbetter again.	18.8	6.3	25.1	
36	I feel my emotions overwhelm me.	23.8	12.5	36.3	23.48

No.	Item	% Op 4	% Op 5	% Sum	% Avg
Subscale: Lack of Emotional Acceptance (FAE)					
	When I feel annoyed:				
11	I reproach myself for it.	13.8	10	23.8	
12	I'm uncomfortable being like this.	22.5	16.3	38.8	
21	I'm ashamed of myself for feeling this way.	5	6.3	11.3	
23	I feel like I'm a weak person.	8.8	7.5	16.3	
25	I have feelings of guilt for being like this.	7.5	10	17.5	
29	I'm irritating myself for being like this.	13.9	11.4	25.3	22.17

No.	Item	% Op 4	% Op 5	% Sum	%Prom
Sub-scale: Target-Directed Behavior Interference (ICM)					
	When I feel annoyed:				
13	I have difficulty doing my job.	17.9	19.2	37.1	
18	I find it very difficult to concentrate on other things.	26.6	16.5	43.1	
20r	I can continue to carry out my activities normally.	27.5	23.8	51.3	
26	I find it hard to concentrate.	21.5	15.2	36.7	
33	I find it hard to think of anything else.	12.7	12.7	25.4	38.72

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Subscale: Lack of emotional awareness (FCE)				
No.	Item	% Op 4	% Op 5	% Sum	% Avg
2r	I pay attention to how I'm feeling.	15	2.5	17.5	
6r	I carefully analyze my feelings.	26.3	7.5	33.8	
8r	I attach great importance to my feelings.	21.3	5	26.3	
	When I feel annoyed:				
10r	I recognize the emotional state I'm in.	27.5	2.5	30	
17r	I consider my feelings valid and important.	13.8	8.8	22.6	
34r	It took me a while to reflect on what I'm really feeling.	16.3	5	213	25.25
Subscale: Lack of emotional clarity (FCL)				
No.	Item	% Op 4	% Op 5	% Sum	% Avg
1st	I think I have clarity about all my feelings	23.8	1.3	25.1	
4	I have no idea how I'm feeling.	5.1	2.5	7.6	
5	I have trouble understanding my emotions.	11.4	2.5	13.9	
7r	I think I know exactly how I'm feeling.	22.5	7.5	30	
9	I have confusion about my feelings.	13.8	6.3	20.1	19.34
Average Percentage					25.47
% Op 4 = percentage of responses in option 4 of the scale % Op 5 = percentage of responses in option 5 of the scale % Sum = sum of the percentages of options 4 and 5 % Prom = average of the percentages of options 4 and 5 in each subscale The "r" accompanying some item numbers indicates that the item is inverse					

Source: own elaboration

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2. *Academic performance.* In terms of academic performance with the information provided by the participants, the percentages shown in Table 4 were calculated. It can be seen that a total of 55 % of participants (men = 59.2 %; women = 52.8 %) said that their average in the previous semester ranged between "excellent" and "very good", while 45 % (men = 40.7 %; women = 47.2 %) said that they obtained an average between "good" and "regular". No participant was placed on the "failed" scale.

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Table 4
Self-report of participants on their academic performance (N = 80)

Scores	Equivalences	% of participants		
		Men	Women	Total
45-50 points	Excellent	11.1	7.5	8.8
40-44 points	Very good	48.1	45.3	46.3
34-39 points	Good	37	41.5	40
30-33 points	Regular	3.7	5.7	5
29 or less	Failed/Insufficient	0	0	0

Source: own elaboration

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Although the percentage of male participants is higher than that of female in the excellent and very good equivalences, and lower in good and regular, with the T test for sample contrast there were no significant differences at the statistical level by gender ($p > 0.05$) in academic performance.

3. *Emotional regulation-academic performance*. The chi-square (X^2) tests were used to assess the association of academic performance reported with the subscales and with the total DERS, and the Cramér V tests were used to assess the degree of the association. It was found that the reported academic performance is significantly and moderately associated with the FAE subscales ($X^{2 = 72.56;}$ *p = 0.047; V = 0.553) and FCL (X2 = 63.255; p0.037; egyptism),* which shows that discomfort and confusion regarding emotions is associated with the grades achieved.

Proposal for psychoeducational intervention

Technique

The logical framework methodology (MML) was used for elaborating the proposal, which is a useful tool for the design, implementation and evaluation of projects, from the identification of the problem and the alternatives of solution, which leads to an operational and practical planning through the Planning Matrix of the Logical Framework" (Ortegón *et al.*, 2015). MML is an internationally used technique in different sectors, including the health sector (Cárdenas *et al.*, 2022).

Procedure

The analysis of the problem identified in the diagnostic phase, which consists in the presence of difficulties in emotional regulation that affect the academic performance of the young university participants in the study, was performed, with which the problem tree was elaborated. Some of the causes identified were: difficulties in raising awareness, recognizing and analyzing feelings and emotions, poor ability to manage conflicts, low intrinsic motivation, difficulties with organization and time management. As consequences were identified: difficulties in goal-directed behaviors, discomfort in the face of emotional discomfort, emotional interference in the development of activities and concentration, high levels of stress and anxiety.

From this analysis, the tree of objectives was elaborated placing in positive, as goals to reach, the components of the problem tree. In this way, the main purpose was to promote the development of competencies related to emotional regulation that favor the academic performance of young university students. Awareness, recognition and analysis of feelings and emotions, conflict management, intrinsic motivation, organization and time management were identified as means to achieve this goal. It was considered that the goals would be achieved: to increase behaviors aimed at goals, to reduce discomfort in the face of emotional discomfort, to minimize the influence of emotions in the development of activities and in concentration, to reduce stress and anxiety levels.

After this step, the analytical structure of the project was developed with its components: recognition and management of emotions, management of stress and anxiety, management of conflicts and relaxation techniques, intrinsic motivation and self-knowledge, management and time management; then, activities were proposed for each component.

Finally, the planning matrix of the logical framework was constructed. The "narrative summary" integrated all the aforementioned aspects in terms of purposes, objectives, components and activities. The "indicators" column identified the expected results of the evaluations to be used for each section of the narrative summary. Verification "sources" noted the places where the information could be verified, in this case the digital files. Finally, in "cases", aspects related to the assistance and participation of those involved were considered.

The psychoeducational proposal was planned considering these inputs, which was previously subjected to a validation process with the participation of three professionals who demonstrate experience and knowledge on the subject.

Analysis and results of the intervention proposal

The main objective of the proposal was to promote the development of competences related to emotional regulation in university students, which favor their academic performance.

To this end, seven workshops were planned with their respective specific objectives, activities and resources, each with an average duration of 1 h 45 min. For the approach of activities, an exhaustive search was carried out on the Internet, in order to select and adapt those that best fit each of the specific objectives proposed. Each workshop begins with a welcome and framing, a space in which the topic, objectives and activities to be carried out are explained. At the end of each workshop, an evaluation is applied in which the participants give their criteria on the activities carried out and on the learning achieved.

Table 5 provides a synthesis of the suggested approach for each workshop.

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Table 5
Synthesis of the approach in each session of the proposed psychoeducational intervention in emotional regulation

1	**Theme**	**Emotion recognition and management**
	Objective	To foster the ability to identify situations that occur due to the predominance and lack of management of a negative emotion.
	Activities	• Dynamic: Guessing emotions. One participant guesses the emotion that others are dramatizing. • Emotional compass: Participants identify, describe, and analyze situations in which they have experienced the emotions indicated in the compass (Lifeder, 2020). • When I get angry...: Participants notice and reflect on their reactions to an angry situation. • Sociodrama: Activity in groups about coping with a problematic situation. • Closing: Participants indicate what they liked and get from the workshop.
2	**Theme**	**Stress and anxiety management no. 1**
	Objective	To recognize reactions related to lack of emotional regulation in situations of anxiety and stress, and their consequences.
	Activities	• Observation: A film in which the protagonists face situations of anxiety and stress is observed in a group (suggested film: *Whiplash*; Chazelle, 2014). Participants record situations that attract their attention and situations in which the characters show little or no emotional regulation. • Closing indication: Bring the annotation sheet to the next session.

3	Theme	Stress and anxiety management no. 2
	Objective	To analyze the behaviors observed in the film, which show a lack of emotional regulation in the management of stress and anxiety
	Activities	• Working groups: Present in the groups, what each participant noted and analyze a document with questions of emotional regulation in the management of stress and anxiety in the observed film. • Exhibition of each work team. • Intergroup discussion. • Closing: Each participant indicates what is taken from the workshop.
4	Theme	Relaxation techniques
	Objective	To familiarize with the use of various relaxation techniques that promote stress and anxiety regulation.
	Activities	• Dynamics: The web. A ball of wool is thrown between the participants. The recipient expresses a class situation that causes stress/anxiety. • Presentation: Explanation of relaxation techniques by means of slides • Breathing and relaxation with background music (Gómez, 2007). • Artistic expression: Painting mandalas, free painting or constructions with clay, depending on the participants. Exhibition of the works on the wall of the living room so that everyone can look at them. • Closing: Forming a circle, each participant expresses how they felt with the workshop. Breathing exercises.
5	Theme	Decision-making and conflict management
	Objective	To promote the development of skills aimed at conflict resolution and decision-making to be used in everyday situations
	Activities	• Dynamics: Turn the sheet over. In groups, participants will place themselves in the center of a cloth placed on the floor and try to turn it around without leaving the cloth (Group Dynamics, 2023). • Model against time: In groups, they must build a model of what the participants decide, in 20 minutes, using only the material provided (cardboard, magazines, sheets), without using others, such as sticks, scissors, staples. Analysis of what was elaborated, the difficulties encountered and the ways of coping them. • Reaching the island: Each group receives a list of elements that are on a ship and that must continue to throw into the sea in order to reach the island (Group Dynamics, 2023). Reflection on the decision-making process. • Closing: Participants express how they can apply what they have worked, in their daily life.
6	Theme	Intrinsic motivation and self-knowledge
	Objective	To provide information and strategies regarding motivation and self-knowledge, which contribute to the formulation of the objectives of your life project

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Activities		• Dynamics: Brainstorming. Write individually what comes to mind in front of the word *motivation*. Glue the paper to the board. In groups, they reflect on what each wrote. • Comment: Video about a commencement speech (suggested to take from YouTube). Analysis of the impact of motivation, self-knowledge and timely decision-making in achieving goals. • Wheel of Life: Each participant selects eight important areas of their life and places them around a circle, numbering them from 1 (least important) to 10 (most important). Reflection on how to act to address each area. • ROLE. To address the aspects identified in the "Wheel of Life", in a sheet with four quadrants, participants must identify: (1) R = internal resources: strengths, qualities, abilities they possess; (2) O = opportunities: external factors that benefit some area of their life; (3) L = internal limitations: aspects of themselves that they observe as limiting; (4) A = threats: external factors that hinder the achievement of their goals. • Life project: It is elaborated from the exercises "Wheel of life" and ROLA. To do this, a sheet with four columns is given to them: scope, goal or objective, time or time frame, and strategies. • Closing: In a sentence, each participant expresses the area of his life in which he considers he must work harder.
7	Theme	Time management and administration
	Objective	To encourage the use of personal resources in the planning of activities aimed at proper management and administration of time
	Activities	• Dynamics: The Sword of Time. In groups, participants put together a five-piece puzzle, in which only one has an identifiable figure (Group Dynamics, 2023). • How do I organize my time? (Marchena *et al.*, 2017): Participants fill out the questionnaire, then identify in themselves strengths and weaknesses in the organization of their time and reflect on strategies that could be useful. • Time management matrix (Sáez, 2023): In a sheet of 4 quadrants, participants identify what is for them (1) urgent and important; (2) not urgent and important; (3) urgent and not important; (4) not urgent and not important. • Presentation: A slide on *Guidelines for Self-Management* is presented (Marchena *et al.*, 2017). Participants give examples. • Closing: Forming a circle, each participant expresses the resource or strategy that he/she uses in favor of his/her time management.

Source: own production.

Discussion

The objective of this paper is based on the findings of previous studies in which the importance of emotional self-management in university life has been documented (*i. e.* Gordillo, 2023; Luy-Montejo, 2019; Mórtigo and Rincón, 2018) and the need to promote the development of emotional competences (Goleman, 2000), so that people can reduce their vulnerability and increase their resilience to everyday problems (Bisquerra,

2020). In particular, the important role of emotional regulation in academic performance during university (Michelini and Godoy, 2022) has been reported.

Regarding the findings of the diagnostic phase of this study, no differences by sex were found at the statistical level in the competence of emotional regulation, evaluated with the application of the DERS. This indicates that, in the participating population, this competence manifests itself similarly in both men and women. However, the results demonstrated the presence of difficulties in different dimensions of emotional regulation, especially in behaviors aimed at goals, suggesting that the emotional situations of the participants hinder the achievement of their achievements.

In addition, it was found that emotional awareness is not correlated with emotional acceptance, nor is it correlated with goal-directed behavior, which is further hindered by the absence of impulse control and the lack of emotional clarity. In other words, little or no recognition of one's emotions prevents their acceptance, generates emotional confusion and, at the same time, interferes with achievements, since there is a tendency to impulsive execution that negatively affects the access of participants to regulatory strategies. This finding leads us to consider the need to work, first, with the emotional recognition of university students as a fundamental pillar of their emotional self-management. In fact, when performing the item analysis on the DERS scale, it was found that the main difficulties are characterized by emotional interference in the concentration necessary for the development of activities, discomfort in the face of emotional discomfort and loss of control over one's behavior, since there are difficulties in analyzing one's feelings, recognizing, and becoming aware of emotions.

In relation to these findings, it is important to mention that reviews and research on the subject indicate that emotional awareness and the resources that derive from it, such as self-control, reaction modification, high tolerance to stress, among others, are coping strategies that positively influence academic performance (Andrés *et al.*, 2017; Bisquerra, 2020). Therefore, inadequate management in the emotional sphere has a negative effect on student achievement. In fact, in this study it was found that about half of the participants obtained an average between good and regular in the previous academic semester and that their poor performance was associated with a lack of acceptance and emotional clarity, suggesting that the discomfort caused by negative emotions and confusion against them have an impact on grades, as they interfere with cognitive processes and, therefore, learning.

The psychoeducational proposal of this study was developed considering the fundamental role of emotional regulation competence in reducing anxiety, managing stress situations, tolerance to frustration (Santoya *et al.*, 2018) and the importance of time management to reduce the level of procastination (Moreta-Herrera *et al.*, 2018). In fact, several authors have pointed out the need to implement programs aimed at developing emotional regulation skills that contribute to academic achievement (Andrés *et al.*, 2017; Moreta-Herrera *et al.*, 2018; Pulido and Herrera, 2017; Rodríguez, 2017; Rodríguez and Rosquete, 2019; Sarmiento, 2022), with the idea that, under certain conditions, emotions can limit executive functions and cognitive resources necessary to manage and process educational information (Andrés *et al.*, 2017). In this sense, without a support program, students with more ease to modulate their emotions would be at an advantage over those with more difficulties in this field (Davis and Levine, 2013).

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Considering this, the proposal is formulated in seven topics organized from the most basic, according to the results of the diagnostic phase, which, in this case, is the recognition and management of emotions. If implemented, the team in charge should follow up on the implementation of the workshops and the sustainability of the learning. It is also important that those who are responsible for its execution be alert to the emotional manifestations of the participants because, if a prolonged negative emotional state occurs in any participant, individualized psychological support should be recommended.

It is important to mention that the product has the necessary endorsement to become a support tool, whose purpose is to ensure and promote mental health for the benefit of the academic achievements of young university students, hence its development has considered the age range of the beneficiary population. However, variations can be made as necessary to adapt it to the characteristics of other population groups.

A limitation of this research is that the diagnostic phase was carried out with students enrolled in a private institution of higher education in Quito. Therefore, it is suggested that new research on the subject focus on other types of university, such as public institutions or those located in other cities, as well as on people with other conditions of development, for example, people with special educational needs or with any disability. Thus, contextualized results can be obtained that contribute with knowledge of the management of emotions and their influence on academic performance in other sectors of the population.

In addition, it is recommended to generate in university institutions, spaces for emotional education, given the importance that it has in

all areas of life, as demonstrated in this study and in works on the subject by other authors (*i. e.* Puertas-Molero *et al.*, 2020).

Conclusions

The state-of-the-art and the findings of this study allow us to conclude that higher education poses cognitive challenges that mobilize a series of emotions in young university students, which add to the individual problems related to personal characteristics and the characteristics of the family and social environment in which they operate. Therefore, the level at which each student has developed the emotional competencies needed to deal with their circumstances, and it has an impact on his academic performance. In this sense, academic performance, as reflected in grades, is the result of several factors that impact on learning.

Because the adulthood demands people who can function with solvency from the different spaces in which they operate, it is necessary for human beings to develop personal skills to face the challenges of life. In the case of young university students, the dimensions of emotional regulation that need to be strengthened to benefit academic performance and professional training have been evidenced, which in turn become a protective factor that promotes one's well-being.

Based on the analysis, it has been observed that some of the emotional skills that should be promoted in this population sector are awareness, recognition and analysis of feelings and emotions, conflict management and time management, which would increase the behaviors aimed at goals, while reducing both impulsive execution and emotional discomfort and their impact on concentration and the performance of activities. In the present study, a psychoeducational proposal has been designed to work on these topics through workshops aimed at young university students, with the purpose of favoring the development of competencies related to emotional regulation, which benefit academic performance.

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